

The Adornian reception of (the) child(hood) in Helmut Lachenmann's *Ein Kinderspiel*

§1 Method and introduction

Contemporary work comments show that many contemporary composers apparently feel a need to legitimize their works, a process of self-reflection in which Adorno's philosophy is both influential and controversial. Studies on the contemporary influence of Adorno's notion of musical material, however, often tend towards unilateral projections of Adorno's ideas on the present or reflections based on typologies. In contrast, a study aiming at a critical reflection on contemporary philosophical assumptions on the basis of the analysis and comparison of specific compositions, appears to be more fruitful. In an attempt to grasp the relation between philosophical constellations and analytical techniques, aesthetic assumptions are necessarily posited, while the actual relation between idea and technique still needs to be discovered by means of the analysis of musical artworks.

In the late sixties, Helmut Lachenmann (1935) - who would always remain conscious of the (remnants of) his own musical and philosophical heritage - developed a new musical material, conceptualized by the composer as "*musique concrète instrumentale*",¹ and expressed in, among others, his notorious composition *Pression* for cello (1969). 1969 is also the year of death of Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, a philosopher, sociologist and musicologist whose influence on the ideas and work of Lachenmann is difficult to overestimate. Like many composers after the Second World War, Lachenmann was well aware of the social responsibility of the artist. Yet, unlike the rather palpable social and political commitment of Luigi Nono, who incorporated in *Il canto sospeso* (1955-56) letters of persons sentenced to death, Lachenmann was on his guard for imposing his own ideology on music and obtaining "authority" which does not arise "from the specific law of composition, its own logic and immanent correctness, but from the gesture from which the work turns itself to the listener"² (Adorno). "For the composer, there is no way to compromise"³, Lachenmann explains. Consequently, Lachenmann does not require the authority of his compositions as already acquired, but tries to uncover and follow the inherent tendency of the musical material itself, a process which would evolve to something necessarily historical and dialectical.

Indeed, once "the public" had, in a way, "digested" and become "used to" the particular soundscape of Lachenmann's *musique concrète instrumentale*, as it was expressed in compositions like *Notturmo* for cello and orchestra (1966-68), *temA* for flute, voice and cello (1968), *Air* for percussion and grand orchestra (1968-69), *Pression* (1969) for cello, *Kontrakadenz* for orchestra (1970-71), *Gran Torso* for string quartet (1971-72) and *Guero* (1980) for grand piano, Lachenmann realized the danger that his works would be perceived as some strange "effect" or curiosity, or worse, absorbed into a "stupid-disagreeable equanimity"⁴ (Adorno).⁵ For this reason, Lachenmann rather considered the material and

¹ "The concept refers to a music in which the sound events are thus chosen and organized, that the musical event does no less involve the manner of their production as the resultant acoustic qualities themselves. Tone, volume, etc. do not sound for their own sake, but mark or indicate the specific situation: one hears the energy and resistance against which a sound arises. One such aspect however, does not exist of itself: it must be exposed and supported by a compositional technique [...]. The whole becomes an aesthetic provocation: beauty as deprived habit." (H. LACHENMANN, as quoted by H.-P. JAHN, *Pression. Einige Bemerkungen zur Komposition Helmut Lachenmanns und zu den interpretationstechnischen Bedingungen*, in *Musik-Konzepte* 61/62, ed. H.-K. METZGER and R. RIEHN, München, 1988, 58).

² T. ADORNO, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, 183.

³ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 358.

⁴ T. ADORNO, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, 148.

composition techniques in the above-mentioned compositions as a model, which needed to be refined in later works, and lifted to a higher - or better: another - level.⁶

In later works, Lachenmann would not only develop his composition techniques (*“Verfahrensweisen”*), but also *“relinquish”* his self-developed musical material (*“Rohstoff”*). In this context, one may refer to one of Lachenmann’s work comments on *Mouvement (-vor der Erstarrung)* for ensemble (1984), a composition in which pitches arise (again):

*“I sometimes read analyses such as Mouvement (-vor der Erstarrung) - originated in 1984 - in which the author is surprised about the presence of strongly organized pitches, which seems at odds with the idea of a “Musique concrète instrumentale”. The drawer does not fit properly. Those are just the small inevitable accidents that happen when one forgets that creativity - although it never forgets - does not know stagnation.”*⁷

Lachenmann thus seems particularly apprehensive about a blind surrender to the material - and social ideology - and tries to back out of it by means of creativity and critical sense. As a consequence, *“old categories of sensation”*, such as melody, rhythm, consonance and pathos, reappear in the margin of his compositions.⁸ At this point, the composer faces the Adornian riddle of the sphinx,⁹ leading to the notorious question: how is it possible to create integrated and autonomous works of art out of reified and disintegrated material? Apparently, Lachenmann knows the answer:

*“[A]t the edges of this compositional approach [the “musique concrète instrumentale”] there appeared such previously excluded, old - though in this context rejuvenated - categories of sensation as rhythm, consonance, melody, pathos, which must be uprooted from their bourgeois commodification and invoked in all their “dangerousness”.*¹⁰

Hence this phenomenon, which was once called by Adorno the *“coming of age”* or *“Mündigkeit”* of new music, is considered by Lachenmann as a possible escape out of commodification or reification. For this reason, it was not Lachenmann’s intention to hide the sediment spirit of the *“all too familiar”* - as in some kind of *“Phantasmagoria”* - but on the contrary, to stress its artificial nature by grabbing and exploring the material as in a children’s play.

⁵ During a lecture at the Orpheus Institute in Ghent, Lachenmann also realized *“that the procedural stringency must go beyond the immediate experience of “palpability”, however it may have been developed, if it is not to lose its way in the botanical or the playful”* (H. LACHENMANN, *Philosophy of composition. Is there such a thing?*, in *Identity and difference: essays on music, language and time*, ed. J. CROSS, J. HARVEY, H. LACHENMANN, A. WELLMER and R. KLEIN, Leuven, 2004, 65). See also M. KALTENECKER, *Lachenmann und Gustav Mahler*, in *Nachgedachte Musik. Studien zum Werk von Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. J. HIEKEL and S. MAUSER, Saarbrücken, 2005, 54: *“A work can stick at such effects [...] and it is in danger of being perceived only as an overall effect (so that only the crunching sounds in Pression are commented [...])”*.

⁶ LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 381.

⁷ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 212.

⁸ H. LACHENMANN, *Philosophy of composition. Is there such a thing?*, in *Identity and difference: essays on music, language and time*, ed. J. CROSS, J. HARVEY, H. LACHENMANN, A. WELLMER and R. KLEIN, Leuven, 2004, 65.

⁹ *“Works of art try to solve the riddles, given up by the world, to devour the people. The world is the sphinx, the artist its blinded Oedipus and the artworks of this kind his wise answer, that plunges the sphinx into the abyss”* (T. ADORNO, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, 125).

¹⁰ H. LACHENMANN, *Philosophy of composition. Is there such a thing?*, in *Identity and difference: essays on music, language and time*, ed. J. CROSS, J. HARVEY, H. LACHENMANN, A. WELLMER and R. KLEIN, Leuven, 2004, 65.

It is in this context, that Lachenmann's piano cycle *Ein Kinderspiel* (1980) may be situated:

"I inevitably grab the occupied material, point out its occupation, experience this 'charge' as negative wealth and sometimes even reinforce this familiar aspect".¹¹

Consequently, Lachenmann does not intent to follow the inherent tendency of the musical material and to destroy taboos out of some ideal of "*imitation of natural beauty*" (Adorno), but rather to intervene in the familiar through deconstruction of the literary, to "*overcome its 'tabooization' and false sense of protection and security*".¹²

The material of *Ein Kinderspiel* consists of familiar shapes and models, "*such as children's songs, dance forms and the easiest grip-technical models*",¹³ considered by Lachenmann as objective data, upon which his own subjective "*experiences of structural thinking*"¹⁴ are projected. The transparent structure of the familiar is indeed shifted to the background, to allow for an "*else*" to develop, something present in the structure, which, at the same time, arises from it: "*the aura of sounds*".¹⁵

Thus, the familiar material "resounds" both literally and metaphysically, presenting a "*non-identity*" (Derrida) out of the resonance of the familiar, "*a familiar else, which questions the certainty of the concept*".¹⁶ As a result, Lachenmann reminds us of certain forces within the reified material, that "*withdraw from the dialectic to which they comply*",¹⁷ in a way comparable to Webern's interpretation of the row as a constructivist notion, that allows for a purification of the individual tones, ultimately creating form, leading to the only possible notification that "*its exterior is not its exterior*" (Derrida).¹⁸

§2 Analysis

Ein Kinderspiel is dedicated to David, the adult child of the composer. The score opens with a quote of Adorno: "*...in which it concerns more the demonstration of a child's model than the charming of childhood...*". A "*false projection*" of an (adult) ideology on the world of the child - such as an education principle or a nostalgic image of childhood¹⁹ - is indeed not the idea, but a "*real mimesis*" of the phenomenon "*being a child*", "*to experience lustfully and, in this experience, discover the world, nature, technology, art and especially itself, thus develop*

¹¹ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 196 and H. LACHENMANN and H.-K. METZGER, *Fragen-Antworten*, in *Musik-Konzepte* 61/62, ed. H.-K. METZGER and R. RIEHN, München, 1988, 123.

¹² H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 165.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 393.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁶ M. SCHERZINGER, *Dekonstruktives Denken in der Musik Lachenmanns*, in *Musik-Konzepte* 61/62, ed. H.-K. METZGER and R. RIEHN, München, 1988, 98.

¹⁷ T. ADORNO, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, 125.

¹⁸ J. DERRIDA, *Randgänge der Philosophie*, Vienna, 1999, 18.

¹⁹ "*Kinderspiel [is] no educational music and is not necessarily for children*" (H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 393). See also M. SCHMIDT, *Vergessenheit. Zu Helmut Lachenmanns Ästhetik der Kindheit*, in *Nachgedachte Musik. Studien zum Werk von Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. J. HIEKEL and S. MAUSER, Saarbrücken, 2005, 105-107 and 114-115.

and unfold its powers ever more”.²⁰ However, if “being a child” is to be more than a mere satisfaction of curiosity about sensory stimuli, “adaptation and discipline”²¹ are inevitably part of the development process.

By these words, Lachenmann broaches the same paradox as Adorno has formulated in *Minima Moralia*, under the paragraph “Hänschen klein”. This title, which refers to a famous German children’s song, is also the name of the first piece of Lachenmann’s piano cycle *Ein Kinderspiel*. Adorno described the paradox as follows:

*“The intellectual is faced with the choice, to inform himself or to turn his back to the hateful. When he chooses for the first, he causes harm to himself, thinks against his own impulses and on top of it, is in danger to become as mean as the thing to which he concedes, for economy does not tolerate pleasure, and if one only wants to understand it, one needs to “think economically”. If, however, he does not take part in it, he actually hypostatizes his own, by economic reality and abstract exchange ratio cultivated, mind as something absolute, while he could only reach the Spirit [“die Geist”] in the contemplation of his own conditionality. [...] He drastically experiences, as existential question, the contemptuous alternatives, in front of which late capitalism secretly puts all its members: to become an adult as well, or to remain a child.”*²²

Thus the listener faces the choice (i) to remain a child and listen to music with an open mind or (ii) to grow up and study the music. In the first case, he is in danger of being unable to relinquish the music and to concede blindly to social ideology by “sensuous listening”²³; in the second case he risks to adopt certain biases or taboos which blind him for the utopian possibility that reality may be different. However, the listener does not need to stay and linger within this antinomy. Indeed, Adorno’s idea of negative dialectic implies that the configuration of the idea emerges from the extremes, “as the totality which is characterized by the possibility of a meaningful existence of such opposites together”.²⁴

Similarly, in *Ein Kinderspiel*, Lachenmann aims at

*“the experience of musical expression, not only as irrationally perceived mind-appeal of our cortical area, but expression, on the one hand, as a result of new issued rules, but on the other also as a result of the overcoming of already settled rules. In this sense, my pieces Ein Kinderspiel intent to be models which are easy to grab and to grasp.”*²⁵

²⁰ Lachenmann continues: “In which it is, of course, no secret, that probably no child is spared from the human experience as “abyss”, that children even come across more abysses, than is known and desired by their educators” (H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 162).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 162. See also *ibid.*, 163: “Therefore I have nothing against music education which is based on traditional heritage. The associated discipline and adaptation is only fatal, when it is not a means for mental development, but a final goal, which also concerns reinforcement and tabooization instead of understanding and pervasive discovery”.

²² T. ADORNO, *Minima moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, IV, ed. R. TIEDEMANN e.a., Frankfurt am Main, 1980, 150-151. See also N. LUHMANN, as quoted by E. HÜPPE, *Topographie der ästhetischen Neugierde. Versuch über Helmut Lachenmann*, in *Nachgedachte Musik. Studien zum Werk von Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. J. HIEKEL and S. MAUSER, Saarbrücken, 2005, 95: “The more the conditions of understanding are understood, the less there is possible”.

²³ T. ADORNO, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, 123.

²⁴ W. BENJAMIN, as quoted by Adorno in T. ADORNO, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, 13.

²⁵ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 163.

Note the analogy with Kant's transcendental aesthetic, according to which aesthetic judgments only occur "*in a free play of imagination and understanding*"²⁶. One may also refer to Nietzsche's metaphor of the child, that says "yes" to the world and, out of the wreckage of the familiar, "*re-creates*" its own morality. The latter image is especially relevant, since it inspired Adorno for his interpretation and description of the compositions *Renard* (1916) and *l'Histoire du soldat* (1918) of Igor Stravinsky as a specific kind of objectivism, that is "*Infantilismus*" (*Philosophie der neuen Musik*). The "*truth*" of those compositions, which, in Adorno's opinion, consists in the fact that their artificial nature is not concealed but emphasized - while the various musical entities and functions are loosened and put back into various capacities²⁷ - is indeed very comparable to Lachenmann's aim to unveil and clarify the musical structure.

Thus, the structure of *Hänschen klein*, the first piece of *Ein Kinderspiel*, is very simple.²⁸ The listener hears a sequence of descending chromatic tones, in which the eighty-eight keys of the keyboard are "*explored*"²⁹ in a mechanical way, at a pace which feels "*too slow*"³⁰ and in a rhythm that, at least until the first half of bar 24, seems entirely based on the nursery rhyme *Hänschen klein*. (This children's song has the form of a small three-part song (ABA'), of which the A-part is composed of a periodic structure of 2x4 bars. After a contrasting middle part of four bars, the consequent of the A-part is resumed. Thus the song consists of 16 bars. Subsequently, bars 17-24 of Lachenmann's *Hänschen klein* may be considered as a varied repetition of bars 9-16 of BA' of the children's song, followed by a *coda* of 7 bars. I will return to this point in due course.) Furthermore, the descending chromatic scales are decorated with appoggiaturas, picked from a whole-tone scale, and two triads: a major sixth chord in bar 9 and a minor six-four chord in bars 29-31 - or two vertical inversions of a minor third and a quarter. Finally, the descending chromatics in bars 17-28 are accompanied by a second chromatic layer, which is put a major third higher than the first one. Thus, the pitch structure of the entire piece can be traced back to all possible intervals within the range of a quarter - as they appear together in the cluster in bars 13-18 - with the exception of the mute clusters in bars 5-8 and 19,4-22.

In literature, the piece has been perceived as a childish riddle, which tempts the listener to deduce the correct song from the rhythm. In this respect, Scherzinger has attempted, with the help of Rehding, to give an explanation to those passages of Lachenmann's *Hänschen klein*, in which the rhythm differs from the children's song. "*Hans*", Scherzinger explains, "*hallucinatory wanders to 'Alle meine Entchen' (from bar 23 onwards)*", after which, from bar 25, he apparently still meets someone else: "*Hans and his ducks, one could say, suddenly meet 'Fuchs, du hast die Gans gestohlen'*".³¹ Authors like Schmidt, on the other hand, rather consider the piece as an attempt to objectify the children's song and to displace it by means of

²⁶ I. KANT, *Kritik der Urteilkraft*, Leipzig, 1922, 56.

²⁷ See on this subject L. VAN EECKE, *Adorno's Listening to Stravinsky - Towards a Deconstruction of Objectivism*, IRASM 45, 2, 243-260.

²⁸ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 164.

²⁹ "*What is going on in the seven pieces of my Kinderspiel, is 'nothing more' than mechanically explored states of a similarly understood pause on a more or less simple stereotypical gesture*" (H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 201 and H. LACHENMANN and H.-K. METZGER, *Fragen-Antworten*, in *Musik-Konzepte* 61/62, ed. H.-K. METZGER and R. RIEHN, München, 1988, 129). See on Lachenmann's notion of "*abtasten*" also E. HÜPPE, *Topographie der ästhetischen Neugierde. Versuch über Helmut Lachenmann*, in *Nachgedachte Musik. Studien zum Werk von Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. J. HIEKEL and S. MAUSER, Saarbrücken, 2005, 96-97.

³⁰ M. SCHERZINGER, *Dekonstruktives Denken in der Musik Lachenmanns*, in *Musik-Konzepte* 61/62, ed. H.-K. METZGER and R. RIEHN, München, 1988, 108.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

small interferences: “*Hänschen klein explores the world in the “almost reckless” movement of the famous children’s song: its rhythm is recognizable, but not its melody. The interval sequence of the song has to be reconstructed by the listening perception, although it does not appear in fact.*”³² Apparently, the famous *Habanera* of the French opera *Carmen* of Bizet is not such a “hit”, that it is immediately recognized by German authors... Nonetheless, the descending chromatic scales, the rhythm, the appoggiaturas - so short that the differences in pitch with the ‘original’ can hardly be recognized - the accompanying triads and the ‘Viertaktichkeit’ sound suspiciously familiar. In addition, each verse of *Habanera* comprises twenty-four bars, which may explain why the rhythmic paraphrase of the children’s song in Lachenmann’s *Hänschen klein* does not last sixteen, but twenty-four bars. In *Habanera*, the choir takes over the melody after sixteen bars, accompanied by four intervals: two minor thirds, an octave and a quarter. Likewise, the mute chords which accompany Lachenmann’s *Hänschen klein*, exclusively consist of those intervals (although the octaves resound with all of their “chromatic nuances”).

Hence Lachenmann composed his *Hänschen klein* out of the remnants of the familiar, which is especially clear in the beginning of the piece. The expectations of the listener are, however, taken for a ride, by (i) a flawless continuation of the descending chromatic scale, (ii) unexpected appoggiaturas (e.g. in bars 6 and 8), (iii) a variation of rhythm and timbre in bars 9-12,...

Gradually, *Habanera* fades away, not only to allow for a rhythmic paraphrase of *Hänschen klein*, but also to develop something present in the composition: “the aura of sounds”³³:

- bars 1-5: pedal with high pitches
- bars 5-8: low mute cluster with high pitches
- bars 9-12: *tenuto*
- bars 13-18: mute cluster *above* the played keys
- bar 19, 1-3: *secco* (“*Extrem im Minimum*”)
- bars 19,4-22: mute cluster *beneath* the played keys
- bars 23-29: pedal with low pitches (“*Extrem im Maximum*”)³⁴

As a consequence, the rhythmic modifications and development of sounds bring about another perception of the famous melody in the coda, which may explain why Lachenmann did not finish the piece with “*grosse Hans*”, but “*neue Hänschen*”³⁵...

In the second piece *Wolken im eisigen Mondlicht*, the ambit of the right hand is limited to an “in five-finger-range staying f-major/minor-scale”.³⁶ Although the independent directions of the fingers and the metric shifts may, at first sight, refer to a simple finger exercise, the chromatic shifts, parallel harmonic progressions, differences of colour, accompaniment of open octaves, use of the pedal and lack of a traditional cadence clearly recalls *Trübe Wolken* (1881) of Franz Liszt.

³² M. SCHMIDT, *Vergessenheit. Zu Helmut Lachenmanns Ästhetik der Kindheit*, in *Nachgedachte Musik. Studien zum Werk von Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. J. HIEKEL and S. MAUSER, Saarbrücken, 2005, 110.

³³ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 239.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

³⁵ M. SCHERZINGER, *Dekonstruktives Denken in der Musik Lachenmanns*, in *Musik-Konzepte 61/62*, ed. H.-K. METZGER and R. RIEHN, München, 1988, 111.

³⁶ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 164.

In *Akiko*, *Falscher Chinese* and *Filterschaukel*, the right hand mainly plays the white keys, the left hand the black keys of the piano. As such, in *Akiko* there is a polyphony of “some kind of phrygian melody”³⁷, *tenuto* and a pentatonic scale, *secco*. The *tenuto* melody is always played on the beat, the *secco* melody initially off the beat, to interfere in the resonance of the *tenuto* melody. At the end of the fourth grand stave, an unexpected 3/16 rest appears, as if one beat has been skipped. As a result, the *secco* melody is noted on the beat, at least in the score, for it appears to be a mere visual peculiarity. Since the *secco* melody is missing as a reference, the metric rules seem to have blurred. This little metric play may recall a deconstruction of jazz music and Adorno’s ideas thereof, such as his remark that “[i]mprovisations [in jazz music] are confined within the walls of the harmonic and metric scene”.³⁸ By contrast, the sounds in *Akiko* rather seem to “withdraw from the dialectic, to which they comply”.³⁹

An experiment with jazz rhythm also appears in *Falscher Chinese*. While the tempo is dictated by the right hand, the left hand wanders along - “a little drunk” - the homorhythmic chords in the right hand, sometimes on, sometimes off the beaten track. Once again, this childish concept and its simple objective structure may point to subjective elements beyond the score. As such, by means of the “sound-aspects” *tenuto*, accentuation and pedal, the dichotomy between marsh- and jazz-music increasingly evolves into chimes, sounding very clearly in bars 25-26 and from bar 30 to the end. In this respect, the piece is already referring to the sixth piece of the cycle, *Glockenturm*.

In *Filterschaukel*, colours are ‘filtered’ from a static element. During a short prelude, a ten tone cluster is struck eight times, to fade twenty-four times into chords, sounding more or less familiar, but “perceived as new into the filter-light”.⁴⁰ Subsequently, there is a short transition (until the end of p. 15) and a second part (from p. 16), in which the ‘filtered’ chords of the first part re-sound in augmentation (twice as long), in another register and according to another playing technique. The ‘filtered’ chords, which evolved entirely from the key attacks in the first part, are now picked from the resonances of the attacks. In the *coda*, the ten tone cluster of the first part is ‘filtered’ once again in the register and according to the procedure of the second part, after which the fingers release one by one (and the last finger still hits one single tone above a mute octave). If the sonority of the piece is reminiscent of an organ or a harmonium⁴¹, its homophony and static character refers to a prelude. As such, the piece may recall the first prelude of *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* (WTC) of J.S. Bach, an entirely homophonic piece in which broken chords are ‘filtered’ in the light of the first tones of each chord, kept sustained until the next. In this respect, the *coda* in *Filterschaukel* - in which the penultimate mute chord is, in a certain way, broken by the releasing fingers and the last finger hits one single tone above a mute octave - may be interpreted as a subtle reference to the last three bars of the first prelude of the WTC.

Then again, the sixth piece *Glockenturm* shows a clear affinity with *La Vallée des Cloches*⁴², the fifth piece of the piano cycle *Miroirs* (1904-05) of Maurice Ravel. Both pieces are composed in different layers, which are also visually represented in the score by means of three staves. Furthermore, the pitch structure of both works is entirely based on some ‘chime’-

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ T. ADORNO, *On Popular Music*, in *Essays on Music*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002, 445.

³⁹ T. ADORNO, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, 125.

⁴⁰ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 165.

⁴¹ M. KALTENECKER, *Avec Helmut Lachenmann*, Paris, 2001, 213.

⁴² See also L. JHANG, *Maurice Ravel’s “Miroirs”: an analytical study of harmony and tonal structure*, Texas, 1994, 88-103.

motives, the rhythm of which is thus composed, that every sense of meter is missing. Ravel reaches this result by (i) handling the chime-motives with great rhythmic and metric freedom (e.g. the interaction between the a- and b-motives in bars 4-5) and (ii) noting the instruction “*very softly and without accentuation*” under the figuration of the ‘resonating wind chimes’ (bar 3). Lachenmann, too, makes use of rhythmic and metric shifts, which appear e.g. in the syncope and metric modifications in bars 3-4 and the metric shifts in bars 24-26 (which may be compared to bars 14-16 in *Akiko*). In addition, Lachenmann avoids every metric sense by composing with absolute time values, such as the alternation of eighth notes and half rests in the middle layer (compare with the *Mode de valeurs et d’intensités* (1949) of Olivier Messiaen).

Unlike Ravel, however, who only composes with the sonority of well-tuned and brilliantly resonant chimes, Lachenmann (also) integrates ‘untuned’, ‘false’ and ‘dull’ sounds in *Glockenturm*. The layered structure of the piece could then be described as follows:

- The top layer is built of dyads, picked from a specifically designed interval structure: the lower the chord, the bigger the interval and *vice versa*. The resulting sonority is one of chimes without (properly) tuned overtones.
- The middle layer consists of dissonant mixtures of descending parallel quarts, which are composed of major thirds and minor seconds. The alternating inversions of those intervals imitate the differential effect of chimes.
- The lowest layer is mainly constructed out of semitone clusters, gradually evolving into whole tone clusters. In this layer, a new playing technique is developed, producing a dull sonority, which is reminiscent of a chime being shortly attacked and muted again.

As *Glockenturm* interferes in the familiar by a deconstruction of the literary, in this case Ravel’s *La Vallée des Cloches*, to “overcome its ‘tabooization’ and false sense of protection and security”⁴³ and to allow for unheard, ‘untuned’, ‘false’ and ‘dull’ sounds, *Schattentanz*, the seventh and last piece of *Ein Kinderspiel*, is based on a well-known rhythmical pattern, to allow for a subjective emancipation of something new, hidden within the familiar. Lachenmann comments on this piece as follows:

“In the seventh piece, yet another reverberation phenomenon of the quasi pedaled keyboard-corpus is developed, which is only uncovered and can only be experienced, as the tone material is limited to the topmost small second interval of the instrument and on this almost dematerialized sound, a gigue-like rhythm in the form of a rondo is performed and modified.”⁴⁴

In a more detailed analysis of this piece, Scherzinger⁴⁵ notices a sudden transformation of the music, “from a self-present sound (as gigue, as pitch-cluster) to a completely strange soundscape (as march, as ghostly cry)”.⁴⁶ The prominence of the rhythm may indeed evoke certain associations with the plastic, perceivable outer world, in the Wagnerian sense of the word.⁴⁷ Thus, the ostinato and percussive beats of the two rightmost hammers of the piano

⁴³ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 165.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ M. SCHERZINGER, *Dekonstruktives Denken in der Musik Lachenmanns*, in *Musik-Konzepte* 61/62, ed. H.-K. METZGER and R. RIEHN, München, 1988, 111-114.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴⁷ “By the rhythmic arrangement of tones, the musician comes into contact with the perceivable, plastic world, in virtue of the similarity of the laws, by which the movement of the visible objects of our perception is known by reason...” (R. WAGNER, as quoted by A. SEIDL, *Vom Musikalisch-Erhabenen. Ein Beitrag zur Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, Leipzig, 1907, 148).

may easily be associated with the movements of a dancer, evoking resonances, such as the ringing of bells. In this respect, Lachenmann comments on this piece as follows: “At least, of this piece one could say, what Ravel uttered on his *Bolero*: “Unfortunately, it does not contain music”.”⁴⁸ In a way comparable to the repetition of the *Bolero* theme with orchestral variations, the *Schattentanz* theme is repeated - except for a few rhythmic variations - with differences in dynamics and resonance. Consequently, the perception of music as a linear time art disappears, to allow for a more static sense of “*Nichtmusik*”.⁴⁹

Lachenmann continues: “All seven pieces, however, concern this specific moment, the experience of music outside the ingrained concept of music.”⁵⁰ In this reflection, Lachenmann seems to hedge against the obvious Adornian analysis, that *Schattentanz* is characterized by a distinct “flavour” and “specialty”, since “only that element is admitted, which marks the articulation and the instrumental colour [in this case, the resonance]”⁵¹, or worse, that music is robbed of its idiosyncrasy by the fetishization of rhythm and the regression of composing and degraded into a “parasite of painting”⁵². Even so, the sounds of *Schattentanz* may also “withdraw from the dialectic, to which they comply”⁵³, to uncover the very essence of music from the objective brokenness of the composition, as it e.g. resounds at the end, as “another reverberation phenomenon of the quasi pedaled keyboard-corpus”⁵⁴, in which, in the words of Wagner,

“the music pronounces the essence of the gestures with such immediate clarity, that, once we are completely soaked in it, once our sight is completely blinded for the intensive perception of the gestures, we finally understand them, without seeing them.”⁵⁵

§3 In conclusion

Bearing in mind the immanent methodology as described in the beginning of this article, it was my intention to explore the aesthetic ideas and assumptions as posited by the composer by means of a rather practical and score-based analysis of Lachenmann’s piano cycle *Ein Kinderspiel*. In this respect, the positive formulation of a final conclusion appears to be rather delicate, if not impossible. However, the analysis of *Ein Kinderspiel* certainly did point out that Lachenmann, inspired by the ideas of Adorno, was on his guard for projecting his own ideology on music as well. Quite the reverse, the objective material is subjectively grabbed and explored as in a children’s play, “in a so-called unbiased process of watchful observation,

⁴⁸ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 165.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 201 and H. LACHENMANN and H.-K. METZGER, *Fragen-Antworten*, in *Musik-Konzepte* 61/62, ed. H.-K. METZGER and R. RIEHN, München, 1988, 129. See also J. HIEKEL, *Interkulturalität als existentielle Erfahrung. Asiatische Perspektiven in Helmut Lachenmanns Ästhetik*, in *Nachgedachte Musik. Studien zum Werk von Helmut Lachenmann*, ed. J. HIEKEL and S. MAUSER, Saarbrücken, 2005, 76: “Here [e.g. in *Ein Kinderspiel*] a procession-like sentence type is realised, which is known in almost all periods of music history: a form of the ritual, the static, the ‘Abgesang’, that begins and ends in nothingness”.

⁵⁰ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 165.

⁵¹ T. ADORNO, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, 147.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 178.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁵⁴ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 165.

⁵⁵ R. WAGNER, as quoted by A. SEIDL, *Vom Musikalisch-Erhabenen. Ein Beitrag zur Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, Leipzig, 1907, 148-149.

trained by reason, intuition and curiosity".⁵⁶ As Lachenmann's compositions thus 'are aware' of their artificial nature and sediment spirit (in the Adornian sense of the word), they are inevitably "*broken*" or dislocated, but they also "*lose the sting of the lie of being a pure soulful sound, primarily and unconditionally*".⁵⁷ The flaws in the composition then, allow for the development of a familiar present into something 'new', as a result of which compositions may, negatively speaking, point beyond...

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⁵⁶ H. LACHENMANN, *Musik als existentielle Erfahrung. Schriften 1966-1995*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 201 and H. LACHENMANN and H.-K. METZGER, *Fragen-Antworten*, in *Musik-Konzepte* 61/62, ed. H.-K. METZGER and R. RIEHN, München, 1988, 129.

⁵⁷ T. ADORNO, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, 170.